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Missouri Farmers Association

An astounding proposal

[Columbia, Mo.]

[1924]

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"From the Missouri farmer, June 1, 1924."

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An Astounding Proposal

(From the *Missouri Farmer*
June 1, 1924)

NOTE—The *Missouri Farmer* is the organ of the Missouri Farmers' Association and is published at Columbia, Mo., by Wm. Hirth, Publisher and Editor.

THE practical defeat, so far as this session of Congress is concerned, of the so-called Barkley Labor Bill through the action of the House of Representatives on May 19th avoided by a close margin a surrender as abject and humiliating as that which accompanied the passage of the Adamson Law during the War—at least so far as the House was concerned. On the pretext that this measure had been "smothered" by the Interstate Commerce Committee, under a new rule 150 Congressmen signed a request that it be taken out of the hands of the Interstate Commerce Committee and thrown into the pit of the House without that calm consideration which can be had

308
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only in the quiet of Committee hearings where the friends and foes of a measure may be fully heard and questioned. In our opinion the charge that the Interstate Commerce Committee had attempted to "smother" the Barkley Bill was nothing more than a convenient smoke screen put forward by the labor leaders who evidently believed that in view of the coming election the House could be stampeded into passing this remarkable proposal—and, in a Congress which has to an alarming degree bowed at the shrine of political expediency, they came perilously close to carrying out their designs.

In a nutshell the Barkley Bill proposes to do away with the present Railway Labor Board and create in its place a flock of new Boards, the five members of the proposed Board of Mediation to receive $12,000 per year, while the 40 members of the proposed Regional Boards shall receive salaries of $7,000 per year and in addition to this, salaries of $4,000 per year are proposed for a swarm of secretaries, attorneys, experts, accountants, stenographers, etc.—and this at a time when the public is already staggering under tax burdens that are well nigh unbearable. To give the reader a further idea in this connection, this new proposed machinery would entail a greater cost upon the Government than is now necessary for the maintenance of the President and his cabinet and for the members of the Supreme Court of the United States. But the enormous cost involved by no means constitutes the real infamy of this measure which seeks to substitute for the present Railway Labor Board (which is made up of representatives of the general public, the railroads and the Railway labor organizations) a group of new Boards which, through the very essence of the act, would be almost completely dominated by the great Railroad Brotherhoods who would thus be placed in position, without serious let or hindrance, to determine their own wage scales. Incidentally, this act would also extend the control of the Unions to the hundreds of thousands of shop employees where peace now reigns—and thus thousands of young farmers, who took these jobs in the strike of 1922, would be driven out to seek other employment.

As one views the matter calmly, two profoundly serious questions are involved

in this new and remarkable proposal—first, the ever growing effrontery of the great Labor Unions to compel Congress to do their bidding—and this with reference to great public service corporations where the public interest is so broadly and deeply involved; second, the fact that the farmer is the chief absorber of freight rates and that he, more than any other class of citizens, will be compelled to "pay the fiddler" in the unquestioned wage increases which the proposers of the Barkley Bill have in mind. That Railway labor and all other classes of labor are entitled to generous wage scales, no fair minded man will deny—and least of all will this be denied by the farmer who wants the laboring men of the country to remain in a position to pay a fair price for the products of his toil—and this the laboring man cannot do unless his toil is fairly rewarded. Therefore, there is no controversy on this score. But when the labor leaders ask the right to be both judge and jury—when they seek to tear down a great impartial public body like the Railway Labor Board and substitute for it new machinery of their own creation and liking, and when, because of the labor

vote, Congress shows an inclination to submit its back to the lash—in these circumstances we are brought face to face with the surrender of free and representative government and unless a halt is called in these premises and called in a most emphatic manner, the time is not far distant when this issue will rock the Nation from center to circumference. "Absolute exclusion" with reference to immigration and the "review of Supreme Court decisions by Congress"—this was the arrogant ultimatum of Samuel Gompers and his associates only a few days ago. And, mind you, this ultimatum comes, not in the form of a petition, but as a demand—and thus the rest of us are apparently expected to assume that the labor leaders are wiser in statecraft and loftier in their patriotism than were Washington, Jefferson, John Adams, Chief Justice John Marshall and Abraham Lincoln and all the rest of that illustrious band whose genius has given to us the greatest republic of all time and whose glorious handiwork is the hope of civilization in this chaotic hour as never before.

Why don't the Railway labor leaders like the Railway Labor Board? Because

as an agency which represents not only the Brotherhoods but the general public and the carriers, it performs its duties from the standpoint of the three great parties at interest—and this is what the Brotherhoods don't want. On the contrary, through the Barkley Bill they are proceeding upon the theory that the question of Railway wages is their own affair and in the meantime if the public doesn't like this viewpoint, why then, as Commodore Vanderbilt put it, let "the public be d——."

So much for this phase of the matter which strikes at the very root of our institutions—and now in conclusion we desire to serve notice on members of Congress that Agriculture is not only not in position to submit to an increase in the existing freight rates, but that, on the contrary, these rates must come down at the earliest possible moment. And since fully 50c out of every dollar the carriers collect is already required to pay their employees, how can a reduction in rates be accomplished when new machinery is created, the deliberate purpose of which is to increase Railway wage scales and to give untrammeled leeway to the strike—

to place the strike where it is beyond the peaceful arbitrament and control of a great and impartial public body? For the remainder of the present session the Barkley Bill has ceased to be a menace—but for the sake of the future we here and now warn members of Congress that the 6,500,000 farmers of the United States who are fighting for their very existence will hold to a strict account those who add another single dollar to the already tremendous freight bill which the farmers of this country are being required to absorb. And this isn't saying anything about the larger question of government of, for and by the Labor Unions, rather than "Government of, for and by the people."

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